

Item No.	Classification: Open	Date: 26 February 2018	Meeting Name: Cabinet Member for Communities, Safety and Leisure
Report title:		Volunteer Strategy	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All wards and residents	
From:		Strategic Director of Housing and Modernisation	

RECOMMENDATION(S)

1. To approve the refresh of the Southwark Volunteering Strategy 2017- 2020 as set out in Appendix 1.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. Southwark Council's Community Engagement Team has worked in partnership with Volunteer Centre Southwark to refresh and build upon the existing borough-wide Volunteering strategy.
3. Over five years ago the initial strategy was built upon the interest and passion generated in the community as a result of the legacy of the London Olympics with a desire to increase awareness of volunteering in the community.
4. This strategy has been developed within the context of a new environment that is responding to austerity measures and the changing relationship between the council and the voluntary and community sector. A joint conference held in July 2016 enabled both the Council and Volunteer Centre Southwark to develop an increased understanding behind the issues involved in accessing volunteering opportunities and a clearer picture around the current context.
5. As a result of the developments this draft strategy which has been co-produced along with voluntary and community sector organisations will seek to drive forward key areas that have been identified around:
 - a) increasing community awareness and knowledge of volunteering opportunities
 - b) promoting and targeting volunteering opportunities across the community
 - c) improving the co-ordination, quality and accessibility of volunteering opportunities.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

6. The importance of the role of volunteers within the current environment of significant cuts to both council services and voluntary and community sector funding. The evidence highlights the fact that there were 44,000 volunteers active during the last financial year and that if that contribution was given a fiscal calculation this would equate to just under £50 million. Many of these volunteers are working to meet key needs of residents that may have been affected by

financial cuts and welfare reform and supporting and navigating residents through these processes.

7. Southwark has the 9th highest population density in England and Wales with just half of its population from an ethnic minority background. With a significantly diverse community many of the volunteers form part of the thousands of voluntary and community sector organisations that exist in the borough. Volunteers therefore are critical in helping to build a strong and resilient borough and contributing to community cohesion.

Policy implications

8. The draft strategy supports the principles and vision of a fairer future for the community in Southwark in tapping into the passions and interests of local residents through the provision of a coordinated and better approach to volunteering. The volunteering opportunities will enable residents to become more aware and involved across a wide range of support areas.
9. There are also significant connections with Southwark's Voluntary and Community Strategy developed in partnership with the Council, Clinical Commissioning Group and the voluntary sector. The strategy promotes and supports accessing community resources and using the local knowledge and expertise of volunteers. In developing such skills and knowledge on the ground we are better to able to understand and know our communities.
10. In developing their existing skills base and the promotion of their personal well-being volunteers have access to better job opportunities, become better equipped for the market place and will have a greater impact on the local economy in Southwark.
11. The focus of the actions to encourage volunteering will be young people this year and 2018 -19 complementing the work of the council on Southwark Youth Council and contributing to the iwill pledge made in October 2016.
12. Older people and promoting their engagement with volunteering will be a theme for 2019-20 supporting the delivery of an age friendly borough.
13. The draft strategy celebrates the diversity of our community in building strong relationships, support and respect among individuals and communities. The council is keen to explore with some of our key partners how to encourage volunteering that both fosters intergenerational interactions and inspires new residents of the Borough to fully engage in community life, good neighbourliness and well being.

Community impact statement

14. Volunteering provides benefits for both the volunteer and the recipient organization or individual and builds community cohesion. The outcomes of the action plan in the strategy will focus on increasing community involvement and target the seldom heard, new communities and people with disabilities as well as holding open engagement events.
15. Volunteering provides opportunities for individuals to increase their skills, knowledge and confidence improving access to jobs and other training for local people and the equality analysis identifies the unemployed as more vulnerable to

low levels of well being, and that in Southwark more young people are not in education, employment or training (NEET) than the national average. The focus in the first two years of the strategy on this group should have a positive impact for young people. In addition a significant percentage of those who volunteer are disabled again demonstrating the value of a strategy to improving the well being of this protected group.

16. The Council will use the data and information gathered from the action plan to help us to understand and know our communities better as well as working with the Volunteering Strategy Group to monitor the progress and the impact of the plan across the community.
17. This strategy will enable the Council, its strategic partners and the Voluntary and Community Sector to rationalise and provide synergy to the current work around volunteering. The action plan that has been developed will enable the partnership to provide a better co-ordinated, more comprehensive and improved quality offer around volunteering for residents and voluntary and community sector organisations.
18. The strategy demonstrates that volunteers are themselves residents that are directly involved in supporting and helping other residents (as recipients of the volunteering). Both positive and beneficial encounters work to promote community cohesion and assist in the delivery of key objectives around fostering good relations between people from different backgrounds and advancing equality of opportunity.
19. The strategy has an action plan that focuses and targets activity around key areas of diversity such as age and disability with current data highlighting that Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic and Refugees feature as key beneficiaries of volunteering.

Resource implications

20. The action plan does involve Council officer time but much of this work can be incorporated and progressed through existing networks and work plans.

Legal implications

21. Refer to the advice from the Director of Law and Democracy below.

Financial implications

22. There are no financial implications as a result of this draft strategy.

Consultation

23. A conference was held in July 2016 with representative from over 40 organisations' from the Voluntary and Community Sector. The aims and objectives were to explore and discuss the current picture around volunteering and identify any barriers around participation.

SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

Director of Law and Democracy

24. The report seeks the cabinet member's approval of the council's Volunteering Strategy for 2017-20.
25. The council is a "best value" authority for the purposes of the Local Government Act 1999. It is under a duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The Secretary of State has issued guidance to assist local authorities to perform this duty and specifically requires that councils should be responsive to the benefits and needs of voluntary and community sector organisations, as well as small businesses. The Volunteering Strategy proposed for adoption here would seem to be facilitative of, or incidental to, the achievement of this objective.
26. Part 3D of the council's constitution reserves to cabinet members decisions relating to significant policy issues in relation to their areas of responsibility. Given the subject of the strategy, the decision is therefore one which the cabinet member is permitted to take.
27. The cabinet member is reminded that the council is subject to the public sector equality duty in section 149 Equality Act 2010. The duty requires the council, in the exercise of all its functions, to have due regard to the need to:
 - a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
28. The duty is a continuing one.

Strategic Director of Finance and Governance (FIN1018 – JB)

29. The report presents the draft Volunteering Strategy 2017-2020 which aims to improve awareness and opportunities for volunteering. Paragraph 17 notes the draft strategy will enable the council to provide a better co-ordinated and more comprehensive volunteering offer by developing the relationship with partner organisations.
30. Paragraph 20 notes there are no financial implications involved in the draft strategy so the policies will be delivered within existing and future budgets set by the council.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
None		

APPENDICES

No.	Title:
Appendix 1	Southwark Volunteering Strategy 2017- 2020
Appendix 2	Southwark's Voluntary and Community Strategy – Common Purpose and Common Cause
Appendix 3	Equalities Analysis
Appendix 4	List of organisations that attended the conference in July 2016

AUDIT TRAIL

Cabinet Member	Councillor Barrie Hargrove, Cabinet Member for Communities, Safety and Leisure	
Lead Officer	Stephen Douglass, Director of Communities	
Report Author	Jasbinder Baddhan, Consultation and Involvement Team Leader	
Version	Final	
Dated	22 February 2018	
Key Decision?	Yes	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments Included
Director of Law and Democracy	Yes	Yes
Strategic Director of Finance and Governance	Yes	Yes
Cabinet Member	Yes	Yes
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team		22 February 2018